

~~ADMINISTRATIVE~~  
~~INTERNAL USE ONLY~~

19 JUL 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Review Staff, OP

SUBJECT : Agency Fitness Report System

1. At your request the SP Junior Advisory Panel reviewed and discussed the present Agency fitness report program. This memorandum presents our comments on what we believe is a most important part of any personnel management system. Individual comments by SPJAP members are attached as attachment A.

2. Over the past twenty-five years managers and personnel officers have been deluged by a flood of literature on employee performance appraisal. We too have actively studied this question and, like our counterparts in government and industry, agree that performance appraisal is a necessary ingredient in an effective personnel management system, yet difficult to administer. Our fitness report system has been scrutinized and modified several times during the Agency's relatively brief history, but in spite of our best efforts we still find that it is an imperfect tool. Too often there is wide disparity between the real man on the job and the description of the man found in the official personnel folder. Each of us has his personal collection of cases where lack of proper documentation in fitness reports has demanded the valuable time of a Career Service Head, a Deputy Director, the Executive Director, and ultimately the Director. Less serious cases have caused poor personnel decisions which, in turn, have affected adversely both the Agency and its employees. Our appraisal mechanism is far from perfect, but then no organization has been bold enough to announce that it has developed a foolproof system that guarantees accurate information all the time.

3. Why does our fitness report system fail to realize our high expectations? We personnel officers have concentrated on the purely mechanical side of performance appraisal and overlooked the purposes of our system. We have made changes in areas like the number and type of rating scales, requirements for narrative comments, and the schedule for submission, yet we have never effectively defined why supervisors and managers need to prepare good fitness reports and how they can use them. Personnel regulations simply say that, "The continuous evaluation of the performance of employees by their supervisors is an essential element of

~~ADMINISTRATIVE~~  
~~INTERNAL USE ONLY~~

-2-

ADMINISTRATIVE  
INTERNAL USE ONLY

the Agency's personnel management program," but do not give any further guidance. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that many view fitness reports merely as a once-a-year bureaucratic requirement with little or no meaning. Regardless of the mechanics surrounding performance appraisal, the best evaluations will be written by supervisors who see the reports as an integral part of their personnel management system. In some cases, the reports are just a paper exercise because both the supervisors who write them and the managers who read them have alternate systems to evaluate their employees -- feedback from the "good old boy" net or informal peer ratings. Written evaluations often run a poor second to these other "tried and true" techniques although they have become less and less useful over the past few years. Our formal performance appraisal system will be more effective when supervisors and managers believe that fitness reports are not only useful but also necessary. As it now stands, the report is just another form that must be completed.

4. Under the Agency's decentralized personnel management system, Deputy Directors and the Heads of Career Services are responsible for most personnel decisions. At the same time, however, we in the Office of Personnel struggle to develop a single fitness report system that will be all things to all people. It would be more profitable to have Directorates and Career Services first examine why they need fitness reports and then study how they use them -- one may see them as a vehicle for motivating employees, another for planning assignments, and still another for identifying managerial potential. These and a score of other reasons are all valid, yet how many components have worked with us to study their unique requirements, tailor the fitness report form to their needs, and explain their viewpoints to employees, supervisors, and other career services. Instead of tinkering with the mechanics of the fitness report, let's help the Executive Director and the Deputy Directors analyze why they need an employee appraisal system and what they can expect from one. Let's then assist the heads of career services and subordinate offices to identify their own needs within the broad guidelines provided by top management. This approach would not require components to create new forms or rating schemes but would force them to review

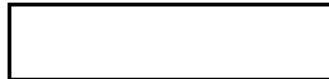
ADMINISTRATIVE  
INTERNAL USE ONLY

ADMINISTRATIVE  
INTERNAL USE ONLY

-3-

and rationalize their performance appraisal systems. Once supervisors and managers see fitness reports as their system, not just a creature of the Office of Personnel, we will have taken an important step toward more meaningful reports. True, we will not have a neat Agency-wide package on fitness reports, but we will have something more useful.

STATINTEL



Chairman

SP Junior Advisory Panel

Attachment

ADMINISTRATIVE  
INTERNAL USE ONLY